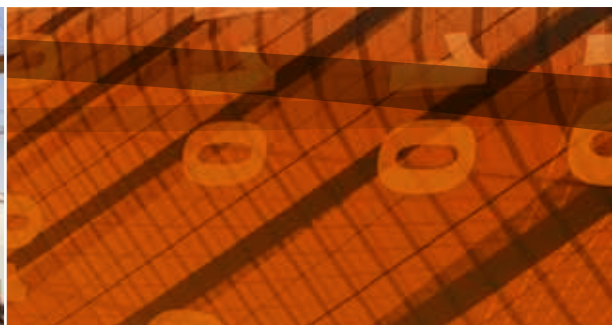


Australian Statistics Advisory Council

Annual Report
2011–12





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ISSN 01550780

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The Hon Bernie Ripoll MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer

I have pleasure in submitting the Annual Report of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council for the year ending 30 June 2012.

The Annual Report outlines the work undertaken by the Council and is submitted to you for presentation to Parliament under sub-section 24(2) of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

The Annual Report is dated on the day I approved the text for printing.

Geoff Allen AM
Chairperson

26 September 2012

Australian Statistics Advisory Council



Mission

To ensure that, in keeping with Council's statutory charter, the advice furnished to the Minister and the Statistician, in relation to the collection and dissemination of statistics, has due regard to relative priorities, is objective, relevant, timely, constructive and practical, and that it is sensitive to the needs of both suppliers and users of statistical data.



The Australian Statistics Advisory Council meeting in Canberra on 29 May 2012

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Note: After the first reference in this report, the Australian Statistics Advisory Council is referred to as the Council or ASAC, the Australian Bureau of Statistics is referred to as the ABS and the National Statistical Service is referred to as the NSS.

Foreword

The role of ASAC is to provide guidance to the Minister and the Australian Statistician on the directions of, and priorities for, official statistics. This includes the improvement, extension and coordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia.

The Council met in November 2011 and May 2012, with discussions covering a broad range of topics including the:

- National Statistical Service (NSS);
- *Essential Statistical Assets for Australia* initiative;
- *Driving productivity and reform: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistics* workshop;
- Whole of Commonwealth government data integration initiatives;
- ABS work program, including collaboration with other National Statistical Offices;
- Census 2011 Products and Services and 2016 Census of Population and Housing;
- ABS Information Management Transformation Program (IMTP).

In August 2011, the Committee for Economic Development of Australia and the COAG Reform Council co-hosted a high level workshop, *Driving productivity and reform: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistics*, at which ASAC members were major participants. The workshop discussed improvements to Australia's statistical system which better meets the increased demands for trusted and meaningful statistics. At the workshop, there was considerable support for a plan or agreement between the Commonwealth and State/Territory jurisdictions on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistics. ASAC continues to provide support to this initiative and to progress the workshop outcomes.

A number of Council members will be actively involved in the 2013 NatStats Conference in Brisbane from March 12-14, which has the theme of *A Better Informed Australia: The Role of Statistics in Building a Nation*. The conference will aim to generate a set of recommendations designed at shaping a future statistical system that will be relevant and responsive to future challenges in Australia. These recommendations will be fed back to the Council.

ASAC members were very pleased with the success of the 2011 Census of Population and Housing, which marked the centenary of national censuses, and welcomed the first release of Census data in June 2012. The Council looks forward to assisting the ABS in achieving their plans for the 2016 Census of Population and Housing and welcomed the planned consultation on new content.



The Chair of ASAC, Geoff Allen AM

Membership

The Council has seen a number of changes to its membership this year. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of Ms Alison Watt and Mr Peter Yu whose ASAC memberships ended in the past year and to welcome Ms Wendy Sawford. The work Council members undertake to support the activities of the ABS, and further the development of the NSS, including membership of other statistical advisory groups, is of significant value.

I am delighted to have been reappointed as the Chair to the Council for a further five years and I look forward to working with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, the Hon Bernie Ripoll MP to provide guidance to the directions and priorities for official statistics. During this financial year, there were a number of changes to the Minister responsible for the ABS and I would like to acknowledge and thank the Hon Bill Shorten MP for his support of the ABS throughout his time as Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation. I also thank Senator the Hon Mark Arbib for his support during his time as Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Small Business and Sport.

I would like to thank the Australian Statistician, Mr Brian Pink, and his team for their positive approach to working with the Council, and for their willingness to consider and act on the advice we have provided during the year. I also thank the ABS staff members who provide secretariat services to the Council, arranging our meetings each year and administering ASAC memberships.

I continue to look forward to working with the Council, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, the Australian Statistician, State and Territory Governments and other key stakeholders in the National Statistical Service to continue to build a richer portfolio of official statistics for Australia.

This report will be available on the Council website (www.asac.gov.au), which also contains information about the Council, including meetings, functions and membership.

Geoff Allen AM
Chairperson



Chapter 1

About ASAC



Chapter 1

About ASAC



ASAC was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

Under subsection 18(1) of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*, the Council is to advise the Minister and the Australian Statistician on:

- (a) *the improvement, extension and co-ordination of statistical services provided for public purposes in Australia;*
- (b) *annual and longer term priorities and programs of work that should be adopted in relation to major aspects of the provision of those statistical services; and*
- (c) *any other matters relating generally to those statistical services.*

The Act enables the Minister and/or the Australian Statistician to seek the advice of Council on these matters. The Council works closely with the Australian Statistician and the Council Chair meets regularly with the Minister to ensure advice and assistance is readily available to them.

The Act provides that the Council shall consist of a part-time Chair, the Australian Statistician (ex officio), and between ten and 22 part-time members, including one nominee from each State Premier or Territory Chief Minister. The responsible Minister appoints the Council Chair for five years and members for periods of up to three years. Members are eligible for reappointment when their membership expires. The membership of the Council as at 30 June 2011 is detailed at Appendix 1.

Subsection 24(2) of the Act provides that: *the Council shall, as soon as practicable after 30 June in each year, prepare and submit to the Minister, for presentation to the Parliament, a report relating to matters connected with the operation of this Act.*



Chapter 2

Summary of activities for 2011–12



Chapter 2

Summary of activities for 2011–12



The Council held two meetings during 2011–12. The first on 15 November 2011 and the second on 29 May 2012. (See Appendix 3 for full agenda listings.)

National Statistical Service (NSS) and ASAC's role

The Council continues to focus on improving co-ordination, integration and cohesion of national statistics and making better use of administrative data sources.

ASAC remains concerned about an increase in uncoordinated investments and duplication of data collections across agencies at all levels of government and the opportunity cost of inadequate coordination and collaboration. Others, such as the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) and the COAG Reform Council, with whom ASAC works closely, have also been concerned about the adequacy and accuracy of data to support outcomes-based performance reporting. Recognising the complementary nature of the issues raised by those demanding meaningful and accurate statistics and those supplying those statistics, CEDA and the COAG Reform Council co-hosted a high level workshop, *Driving productivity and reform: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistics*, in August 2011.

The workshop was convened by the CEDA and ASAC Chair, Mr Geoff Allen AM, and Chair of the COAG Reform Council, Mr Paul McClintock AO, and sponsored by the then Assistant Treasurer, the Hon Bill Shorten MP. The workshop was attended by 40 senior government and non-government subject matter experts. Participants at the workshop discussed opportunities for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's national statistical system and revisited the issues examined in the 1970s Crisp Review, with the intention of improving the coordination, integration and cohesion of national statistics, and making better use of administrative data sources.

At the workshop, there was considerable support for a plan or agreement between the Commonwealth and State/Territory jurisdictions on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistics. The aspiration is for Commonwealth and State/Territory jurisdictions to work together with the Australian Statistician to articulate the purpose and objectives of the national statistical system, the outcomes to be achieved, the principles to guide the development, collection, and use of statistics, a reform agenda with associated milestones, benchmarks and timelines, and roles and responsibilities of governments and key institutions. The workshop also recognised that many improvements to Australia's information system have resulted from an investment in data custodians to enable them to treat their data as a strategic asset.

As part of the response to this workshop, ASAC has been supporting the ABS with the *Essential Statistical Assets for Australia* initiative. This initiative aims to identify Australia's essential statistics and to identify any information gaps to provide greater focus for future investments. ASAC members have provided the ABS with constructive advice both in the development of the list of datasets as well as approaches to gain stakeholder buy-in during the public consultation phase of the project.

Progress of COAG Reforms

Ms Mary Ann O'Loughlin, Executive Councillor and Head of Secretariat of the COAG Reform Council (CRC), provided ASAC members with an update on COAG issues at the May 2012 meeting. Ms O'Loughlin reported that the Reform Council would complete its review of six National Agreements by the end of June 2012. While the review process was achieving improvements this would not be fully confirmed until the reporting process began. Ms O'Loughlin also highlighted the need to get all jurisdictions to agree on what to measure and how, particularly when reporting on effects of government funding.

It was noted that the ABS role in providing statistical advice has been well received by the CRC. In addition, ABS data collections are being managed to meet COAG demands in both the short and long-term. ASAC supports the ABS continuing to work with the CRC to improve outcome measures.

Statistical Data Integration

ASAC endorsed the ABS's approach to recent and planned developments for Commonwealth data integration. ASAC advised that integration was one of the most important issues facing data management in Australia, and noted the potential and valuable impact of this initiative on policy development. ASAC supported the ABS' role in undertaking data integration projects and noted the issues and risks involved in integrating administrative data, particularly in terms of compliance with privacy and other relevant legislation. Council members supported the ABS taking a strong stand on confidentiality and continued to support the Bureau setting a best-practice standard to ensure that the trust of the Australian community was maintained.

ASAC also provided feedback and advice on a whole-of-government initiative led by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE), to improve the collection and coordination of firm-level data. The initiative is in a consultative stage and DIISRTE will report back to the Council on the outcomes from these discussions.

Strategic Directions and Emerging Enterprise Risks

ASAC provided advice on a range of strategic long-term directions regarding the ABS's work program including: macroeconomic survey improvements; developing a Geocoded National Address Frame; and the move to an address-based frame for the 2016 Census and a smarter eCensus collection.

The Council recognised quantitative skills and the ability to think critically were vital to the health of a capable national statistics organisation and suggested opportunities for developing future statisticians.

The Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey

ASAC members provided advice on the promotion of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, which will be conducted over the next two years. The ABS has planned a strong community engagement program to generate awareness and support for the survey. This survey covers health status and outcomes, determinants of health and health system use and will assist in the *Closing the Gap* initiative, as well as State and Territory planning, monitoring outcomes and evaluation of programs.

Information Management Transformation Program and ABS 2017

The Council supported the ABS's newly formed ABS 2017 group, which brings together large statistical improvement initiatives for the ABS and is aimed at designing solutions that can be used across the whole organisation. The purpose of the program is to drive productivity and capability by reducing the cost of collecting, processing and building collections, with savings to be reinvested into better design, engagement and analysis. The Council noted the considerable challenges of securing adequate investment in the short-term to ensure longer-term benefits that will be essential to a well informed and highly productive Australian society in coming years.



Chapter 3

The Year Ahead - 2012–13



Chapter 3

The Year Ahead – 2012–13



ASAC members have reviewed ABS proposals covering the following priorities in 2012–13:

Statistical Directions and Priorities

Over the next 12 months the Council will advise the Statistician and the Minister on statistical services and priorities on the ABS work program for 2012–13 to 2015–16. In addition, the Council will advise the ABS on the directions and priorities it should be considering to enable it to remain relevant as Australia's National Statistical Organisation (NSO) in the longer term. The Council will continue to engage with members of international statistics committees to gain insights into priorities and risks facing other NSOs around the world.

COAG Initiatives and Reform

The Council will continue to monitor and support the statistical aspects of COAG initiatives. ASAC will keep abreast of the reform program across Commonwealth and State/Territory governments, and provide advice aimed at ensuring that needs are considered in the context of overall statistical priorities.

National Statistical Service

ASAC will continue to lead discussions on the need for a national agreement to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistical system. The Council will build on support gained from the CEDA and the COAG Reform Council high level workshop on *Driving productivity and reform: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Australia's official statistics* held in August 2011.

In addition, ASAC will continue to work closely with the ABS to support and encourage the *Essential Statistical Assets for Australia* initiative. This initiative is designed to identify a list of essential statistics produced by governments and to ensure the most efficient use of government resources on future information development where it will have the most impact.

A number of Council members will be involved in the 2013 NatStats Conference in Brisbane from March 12–14, which has the theme of *A Better Informed Australia: The Role of Statistics in Building a Nation* and will promote attendance in the coming months.

Census of Population and Housing

The Council will continue to assist the ABS with the 2016 Census of Population and Housing preparations. Council members support the ABS's intentions to further extend the use of e-Census facilities in the 2016 Census. The Council will provide feedback and advice on developments for the 2016 Census, including when public consultation on topics for inclusion in the next Census commences in 2012.

ABS Future Sustainability

The Council recognises that the ABS is a world class organisation, but has ageing infrastructure, systems and processes. To ensure the ABS remains a high performing organisation the ABS has created the ABS 2017 group, which is focussed on investing in statistical infrastructure and capability to re-engineer business processes. The Council supports this approach, noting additional funding from government will be required to fully ensure long-term sustainability and mitigate risks to key national statistical outputs.



Appendices



Appendix 1

Membership of ASAC



Member	Date first appointed
Mr Geoff Allen AM Director and Founder, The Allen Consulting Group	1 March 2007
Mr Brian Pink Australian Statistician (ex officio)	5 March 2007
Ms Glenys Beauchamp Secretary, Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	27 April 2006
Ms Pam Davoren Deputy Chief Executive, Policy Division, ACT Chief Minister's Department	18 November 2005
Mr Clem Doherty Chairman, Like Minded Individuals Pty Ltd	1 May 1997
Ms Elaine Henry OAM Chair, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth	15 May 2005
Professor Graeme Hugo University Professorial Research Fellow, Professor of Geography, and Director of the National Centre for Social Application of Geographic Information Systems, The University of Adelaide	15 May 2005
Dr James Moody Executive Director, Development, CSIRO	15 May 2005
Mr Tony Stubbin Deputy Under-Treasurer, Northern Territory Treasury	9 April 2009
Ms Louise Sylvan Chief Executive Officer, Australian National Preventive Health Agency	15 May 2005
Mr Peter Verwer Chief Executive Officer, Property Council of Australia	24 July 2008
Mr Peter Horn Director, Fiscal Strategy, New South Wales Treasury	01 May 2003
Mr Michael Taylor AO Chair, Gardiner Foundation	22 February 2010
Mr Peter Yu Chair, Nyamba Buru Yawuru Ltd	22 February 2010

Member	Date first appointed
Ms Serena Wilson Deputy Secretary, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	22 February 2010
Dr David Gruen Executive Director, Macroeconomic Group (Domestic), Australian Treasury	18 June 2010
Dr David Johnson Director Macroeconomics, Forecasting and Fiscal Strategy, Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance	07 November 2010
Mr Saul Eslake Chief Economist, Australia & New Zealand, Bank of America Merrill Lynch	08 November 2010
Dr Gary Ward Assistant Under-Treasurer and Queensland Government Statistician	27 May 2011
Mr Chris McGowan Director, National Reform Implementation, South Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet	22 May 2011
Mr Matt Cowgill Project Officer, Australian Council of Trade Unions	23 May 2011
Mr Michael Court Executive Director, Western Australian Department of Treasury	27 July 2011
Ms Wendy Sawford Deputy Secretary, Economic & Financial Policy, Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance	19 August 2011

Changes in Membership between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012

01 October 2011	Appointment of Mr Michael Court
19 August 2011	Appointment of Ms Wendy Sawford
28 February 2012	Reappointment of Mr Geoff Allen
19 August 2011	Resignation of Ms Alison Watt
01 May 2012	Resignation of Mr Peter Yu

Appendix 2

Operation of ASAC



The Australian Statistics Advisory Council was established by the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*.

The Chairperson of the Council receives an annual fee, set by the Remuneration Tribunal, and members are reimbursed their travel costs, where applicable. Apart from the Chairperson, no members receive remuneration for serving on the Council.

Secretariat services for ASAC are provided by the ABS. The office of ASAC Secretary is held by the Assistant Statistician, Office of the Statistician and External Engagement. Secretariat support provided by the ABS includes organising and recording meetings, administering membership and the members' website, and the preparation of the Council's Annual Report.

All costs outlined above are met from within the ABS Budget.

Appendix 3

Agenda for ASAC Meetings



29 May 2012 Meeting - Agenda

1. Summary Record of Previous Meeting
2. Chairperson's Report
3. Statistician's Report
4. ABS Resource Allocation in Outyears
5. Bringing Forward Member Issues
6. Update from Council of Australian Governments (COAG)
7. Update on COAG Issues
8. Improving the Collection and Coordination of Firm Level Data
9. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
10. Census 2011 Products and Services
11. Australia's Estimated Resident Population (ERP)
12. Essential Statistical Assets for Australia
13. Commonwealth Data Integration
14. United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting
15. ABS 2017 Programs
16. Members Closed Session

15 November 2011 Meeting - Agenda

1. Summary Record of Previous Meeting
2. Chairperson's Report
3. Statistician's Report
4. ABS Resource Allocation in Outyears
5. Bringing Forward Member Issues
6. Confidentiality Papers
7. Crisp Revisited Workshop Outcomes and Next Steps
8. Nationally Important Datasets
9. Key Statistical Priorities
10. 2016 Census Strategic Directions (including wrap up of 2011 Census)
11. ABS Enterprise Risks
12. Members Closed Session

Appendix 4

Freedom of Information Statement



Below is a statement, as required by section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, about the structure of ASAC and how members of the public can obtain access to information held by it.

Establishment, organisation and functions

For information regarding the establishment, organisation and function of ASAC see Chapter 1 – About ASAC.

Powers

As an advisory body, ASAC has no decision-making or other powers directly affecting members of the public. It does not administer any enactments or schemes.

Arrangements for outside participation

ASAC members are appointed by the Minister responsible for the ABS so that a broad range of views and interests are reflected in the advice that it offers to the Minister and the Australian Statistician. For membership details see Appendix 1.

Persons or bodies outside the Australian Government administration may participate in the Council's policy formulation by making representations to the Minister or the Chairperson on matters of concern to them.

Categories of documents

The ASAC Annual Report, which is tabled in Parliament, is available from all ABS offices, and on the ASAC and ABS websites. The ABS maintains files, on behalf of ASAC, which contain documents relating to: the administration of the Council; papers discussed at Council meetings; summary records of proceedings of meetings; and correspondence relating to the activities of the Council.

Freedom of information procedures and initial contact points

All inquiries concerning access to documents, including inquiries under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, may be directed on weekdays, between 8.30am and 4.30pm, to -

Secretary
Australian Statistics Advisory Council
c/- Australian Bureau of Statistics
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